

Thursday, April 5, 2007

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Wednesday April 4, 2007

## Lincoln goat program receives \$28,000 in Ag Development funds

By **STEPHANIE SCHELL**  
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The Goat and Sheep Diversification Program in Lincoln County recently was approved for \$28,000 in Agricultural Development Funds by the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board.

The cost-share proposal was submitted by the county's Goat and Sheep Producer's Association to the Lincoln County Agricultural Development Council and the state's Agricultural Development Board to help improve the county's net-farm income. The program was established to encourage the development of meat and dairy goat and sheep production, marketing and value-added processing in Kentucky.

"We are continuing to strive for agricultural diversification across the commonwealth," said Rep. Danny Ford, R-Mount Vernon.

The \$28,000 works as an incentive for former tobacco farmers to explore different farming options. The program allows former tobacco farmers to purchase goats, and if they qualify, get reimbursed for half of

what they paid, said Bobby James, treasurer of Lincoln's Goat and Sheep Diversification Program.

The purchase of sheep also qualifies for reimbursements, James said, but "we just don't have any sheep people in the county." However, if the group does accumulate enough sheep to sell, the same criteria applies for purchasers of both sheep and goats who are seeking reimbursement.

"It helps (former tobacco farmers) offset what they have lost," James said of the program.

### **Didn't apply last year**

Lincoln's program didn't apply for development funds last year. In 2005, though, the program received \$25,000 in funds. James said reimbursement of half the farmer's funds seems to work as an incentive. He said it worked for him. "That's the way I got into the goat business myself," James said.

James started with 11 goats, and is now up to 70. He said the biggest change in the program this year is, it hinges around tobacco more than it did.

The whole point of the program is to lessen Kentucky's dependence on tobacco production while revitalizing the farm economy by increasing net-farm income and creating sustainable new farm-based enterprises, according to a press release from the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board.

Anyone interested in purchasing sheep - when available - and goats, and those interested in the reimbursement aspect of Lincoln's program, must qualify. James said some of the qualifications include having adequate space, being a resident of Lincoln County and having been involved with tobacco production in some way.

For more information about the sign-up period and guidelines for the program, call James at (606) 365-2681. To learn more about cost-share and loan programs available in your area, call the Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy at (502) 564-4627.

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